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December 12, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Pamela Herman

RE: STAFF BRIEF: ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER OF CREDITS: COMMON COURSE NUMBERING AND NAMING SYSTEM

The 2005 Interim Workplan for the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) includes a presentation of recommendations of the Higher Education Department (HED) Articulation Task Force for a common course numbering and naming system for New Mexico public postsecondary institutions.

Issues:

In 2005, the LESC endorsed and the Legislature enacted SB 161, *Common Lower-Division College Course Numbers* (Laws 2005, Chapter 272), to address the concerns about articulation and transfer of college credits that were presented to the committee in testimony during the 2003 and 2004 interims. In those presentations, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE, now HED), deans of teacher preparation programs, and the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges (NMACC) stated that New Mexico students transferring between postsecondary institutions were sometimes required to repeat substantially equivalent courses to earn a baccalaureate degree, and that these articulation problems:

- Occur both for courses in the general education core and those in particular degree programs;
- Cause additional expense for students and the state Lottery Tuition fund; and
- Lengthen the time required to complete a degree, and may discourage some students from doing so.

The legislation amended the 1995 *Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act* as follows (see Attachment):

- It requires that in establishing and maintaining the statewide articulation plan for public postsecondary institutions required in statute, HED must:
 - establish a common course naming and numbering system for all substantially equivalent lower-division courses by the 2006 spring semester;
 - establish a process to identify lower-division courses to be included in the common course naming and numbering system;
 - develop discipline modules (the lower-division courses that meet requirements for a specific bachelor's degree, including the general education core) for at least 64 credits on the following timetable:
 - ✓ by the 2006 spring semester, the general education core and discipline modules for business and early childhood education;
 - ✓ by the 2007 fall semester, three additional discipline modules;
 - ✓ by the 2008 fall semester, three additional discipline modules; and
 - include new information in the annual report to the LESC, the Legislative Finance Committee, and the Governor regarding the status of articulation programs and the transfer of students between institutions, analyzing:
 - ✓ the average number of credit hours taken by graduating transfer students compared to the average number taken by graduates who originated at an institution; and
 - ✓ outcomes based on factors such as transfer rates, persistence rates after transfer, and graduation rates.
- The law requires that when a student attempts to transfer credits from one institution to another, a postsecondary institution must:
 - accept a successfully completed 35-credit general education core as a block for credit toward general education degree requirements;
 - accept general education core courses completed for dual credit by a secondary student toward fulfilling lower-division college degree-requirements;
 - accept any course within a transfer module for credit toward degree requirements;
 - accept completed transfer modules as a block toward fulfilling required lower-division coursework;
 - grant admission to an upper-division program to a transfer student who has completed a discipline module;
 - publish in the student handbook or otherwise notify students of the process for complaints that a transfer module course is not accepted for credit;
 - reimburse a student whose articulation complaint to HED is upheld for the complete cost of tuition, books and fees of each course the student was required to repeat; and
 - conform all printed materials to the common course numbering system by fall 2006.

According to HED, an Articulation Task Force was formed in July 2004 and charged with responding to the issues that gave rise to the passage of the 2005 amendments. HED states that the task force assumed the responsibility for developing a system that would ensure the transferability of the statewide general education core, creating a set of competencies for each area under general education, creating a common template for communicating competency components, and developing a common course numbering and naming system. HED states that the Articulation Task Force completed its work on October 20, 2005.

Background:

In New Mexico and across the United States, it is now common for students enrolling in higher education to attend more than one institution before they receive their degrees:

- According to a 2005 US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, as of 2001, 40 percent of students who enrolled in school year 1995-1996 had attended at least two institutions during the following six years.
- According to the CHE 2001 Report of Student Transfer*, half of bachelor's degree recipients in the state in 1999 and 2000 had transferred from another institution.

The GAO points out that the credit transfer process (to the extent that it delays students' progress toward a degree or requires students to repeat courses unnecessarily) can affect the time it takes students to graduate and the cost of postsecondary education, both to students and to financial aid grantors.

- In New Mexico more than half of the cost of courses that are repeated is born by the state. HED data show that approximately 61.6 percent of budgeted public college revenue for instruction and general purposes comes from the general fund through the higher education formula in FY 05. Other state funds for instruction at public colleges come from the Land Grant Permanent Fund, the Lottery Tuition Fund, and other state tuition grant programs.

Presenters:

Dr. Jozi De Leon, Deputy Secretary, Academic Affairs, Planning and Research, HED; Dr. William V. Flores, Provost, New Mexico State University; and Dr. Steven Gamble, President, Eastern New Mexico University, will present the recommendations of the HED Articulation Task Force for a common course numbering and naming system for New Mexico public postsecondary institutions.

* the most recent available data

Questions the committee may wish to consider:

1. What process did HED establish to identify lower-division courses as substantially equivalent for the common numbering system?
2. How will HED ensure that the course content across institutions remains comparable and sufficient to prepare students for upper-division course work?
3. What further action, if any, is required of HED and postsecondary institutions to have the first discipline modules in place by the spring semester 2006 statutory deadline?
4. What is the procedure for articulation complaints and how is it made known to students?
5. How many articulation complaints, if any, did HED receive for school year 2004-2005? What were the final dispositions of those complaints?
6. How have HED and postsecondary institutions met the statutory mandate to have a process in place to monitor and improve articulation and the progress of each transfer student?
7. How does HED provide appropriate information to students' originating institutions as required in statute?

ARTICLE 1B
Post-Secondary Education Articulation

Section

- 21-1B-1 Short title.
- 21-1B-2 Definitions.
- 21-1B-3 Articulation plan; development; implementation; establishment of transfer module.
- 21-1B-4 Use of transfer module; transfer of credits.
- 21-1B-5 Oversight of articulation programs; complaint procedures.
- 21-1B-5.1 Articulation complaint process; notification.
- 21-1B-6 Reporting.
- 21-1B-1. Short title. (2005)

Statute text

Chapter 21, Article 1B NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act".

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 1; 2005, ch. 272, § 1.

Annotations

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, changes the statutory reference to the act.

21-1B-2. Definitions. (2005)

Statute text

As used in the Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act [21-1B-1 NMSA 1978]:

- A. "articulation" means the transfer of course credit from one institution to another;
- B. "commission" means the commission on higher education;
- C. "discipline module" means lower-division courses, including the general education core, that meet the lower-division college-level requirements for a specific degree;
- D. "general education core" means the grouping of lower division general education courses of at least thirty-five hours that are established by the commission for transfer and that are accepted by all institutions for transfer purposes;
- E. "institution" means an accredited, public post-secondary educational institution operating in the state; and
- F. "module" or "transfer module" means a standardized list of courses established by the commission for which credit is accepted for transfer from one institution to another.

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 2; 2005, ch. 272, § 2.

Annotations

Effective dates. — Laws 1995, ch. 224 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, the Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act is effective on June 16, 1995, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature. See Volume 14 NMSA 1978 for "Adjournment Dates of Sessions of Legislature" table.

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, adds Subsection C to define "discipline module"; adds Subsection D to define "general education core"; and deletes "skills" from the definition of "module" or "transfer module".

21-1B-3. Articulation plan; development; implementation; establishment of transfer module. (2005)

Statute text

- A. The commission shall establish and maintain a comprehensive statewide plan to provide for the articulation of educational programs and facilitate the transfer of students between institutions.
- B. In establishing a statewide articulation plan, the commission shall:
- (1) establish a common course naming and numbering system for courses identified as substantially equivalent lower-division courses; provided that the commission shall establish an interim mechanism of a statewide equivalency table that uses a universal taxonomy to identify substantially equivalent courses until the common system is in place;
 - (2) establish a process to identify courses as substantially equivalent. The process shall:
 - (a) include a procedure for each course whereby faculty members from each segment teaching the academic discipline will reach mutual agreement on the material to be taught and the competencies to be gained;
 - (b) ensure that the content of each course is comparable across institutions offering that course;
 - (c) ensure that substantially all the content agreed to among the institutions as the content to be covered by a course is in fact covered in that course and that students successfully completing the course will achieve like competencies with respect to the content covered; and
 - (d) ensure that the content requirements for each course will be sufficient to prepare students for upper division course work in that field; and
 - (3) define, publish and maintain modules of lower-division courses accepted for transfer at all institutions and meeting requirements for lower-division requirements established for associate and baccalaureate degree-granting programs.
- C. The commission shall ensure that institutions develop transfer modules that include approximately sixty-four hours of lower-division college-level credit.
- D. Transfer modules shall include a common general education core component of not less than thirty-five semester hours. This general education core shall include a comprehensive array of lower-division college-level courses designed to demonstrate skills in communication, mathematics, science, social and behavioral science, humanities, fine arts or comparable areas of study coordinated for the purpose of providing a foundation for a liberal education for all programs normally leading to a baccalaureate degree. The general education core shall transfer as a block and count as required lower-division coursework toward a degree, and any course in the core shall be transferable and shall count as credit hours toward fulfilling an institution's general education core requirements.
- E. Any course in the general education core may be offered for dual credit to secondary school students and, upon successful completion, the course shall be transferable to any institution and shall count as fulfilling a required lower-division course.
- F. A discipline module shall consist of an agreed-upon number of hours and courses, including the general education core, of approximately sixty-four hours applicable to the discipline and any course within the discipline module is transferable and shall count toward fulfilling degree requirements at a four-year institution.

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 3; 2005, ch. 272, § 3.

Annotations

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, adds Subsection B(1) to provide that the commission shall establish a common course naming and numbering system for courses substantially equivalent to lower division courses and an interim mechanism of a statewide equivalency table; adds Subsection B(2)(a) through (d) to provide for a process to identify courses as substantially equivalent; provides in Subsection C that transfer modules shall include approximately sixty-four hours of credit; provides in Subsection D that the general education core shall transfer as a block and count as required lower-

division course work and that any course in the core is transferable as credit toward the general education core requirements; adds Subsection E to provide that courses in the general education core may be offered for dual credit to secondary school students and be transferable as credit for a required lower-division course; and adds Subsection F to provide that a discipline module shall consist of approximately sixty-four hours applicable to the discipline and that any course within the discipline module is transferable as credit toward degree requirements.

21-1B-4. Use of transfer module; transfer of credits. (2005)

Statute text

A. Each institution shall accept for transfer course credits earned by a student at any other institution that are included in a transfer module. Transfer credits shall be accepted to meet lower-division graduation requirements of an institution's degree-granting programs. This provision also applies to any course that is part of a transfer module.

B. An institution shall not increase requirements for degree-granting programs as a result of the use of a transfer module or acceptance of a course that is part of a transfer module. An institution may specify additional lower-division or upper-division requirements not included in a discipline module for one or more programs of study, provided that those requirements apply equally to transfer students and students originating their study at the institution.

C. Each institution shall accept completed transfer modules in total as a block and shall count the modules, whether they are the general education core or a specific discipline module, as fulfilling required lower-division coursework. Upon transfer of a completed discipline module, a student shall be granted admission to the upper-division program, except in limited access programs.

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 4; 2005, ch. 272, § 4.

Annotations

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, provides in Subsection A that Subsection A applies to any course that is part of a transfer module; provides in Subsection B that an institution shall not increase the degree requirements as a result of acceptance of a course that is part of a transfer module and that an institution may specify additional requirements not included in a discipline module for programs of study; deletes the former provisions of Subsection C which provided that the commission establish procedures to identify additional lower-division courses in specific disciplines of study that will be transferable and applicable to baccalaureate degrees in specific programs of study; and adds Subsection C to provide that institution shall accept completed transfer modules as a block as fulfilling lower-division coursework and upon transfer of a discipline module, admit students into the upper-division program.

21-1B-5. Oversight of articulation programs; complaint procedures. (2005)

Statute text

A. The commission shall establish and maintain a process to monitor and improve articulation through frequent and systematic consultation with institutions. Institutions shall monitor the progress of each transfer student and provide appropriate information to the student's originating institution.

B. The commission shall establish a complaint procedure for transfer students who fail to receive credit for courses contained in a transfer module taken at another institution. The commission may set standards for determining bona fide complaints, including a requirement that students follow institutions' internal procedures for resolving complaints prior to submitting them to the commission. The commission shall investigate all articulation complaints and render decisions as to the appropriateness of the actions of the participants.

C. Prior to December 31 of each year, the commission shall summarize all articulation complaints filed with the commission and the decisions of the commission with regard to those complaints. For those complaints for which the commission finds merit, the commission shall calculate the number of credits refused at the receiving institution and recommend a corresponding reduction of legislative funding to the next session of the legislature.

D. When a module becomes effective as provided in Subsection F of Section 21-1B-6 NMSA 1978, if a student's articulation complaint regarding courses contained in a module is upheld, the receiving institution shall reimburse the student the complete cost, including tuition, books and fees, of each course the student was required to repeat at the receiving institution.

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 5; 2005, ch. 272, § 5.

Annotations

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, adds Subsection D to provide that if a student's articulation complaint is upheld, the receiving institution shall reimburse the student the cost of each course the student was required to repeat.

21-1B-5.1. Articulation complaint process; notification. (2005)

Statute text

The receiving institution shall publish in the student handbook or otherwise notify transfer students of the complaint process to be followed in the event that a transfer module course is not accepted for credit. The notification shall include the remedy available to the student if the complaint is upheld.

History

History: Laws 2005, ch. 272, § 6.

Annotations

Effective dates. — Laws 2005, ch. 272 contains no effective date provision, but, pursuant to N.M. Const., art. IV, § 23, is effective June 17, 2005, 90 days after adjournment of the legislature.

21-1B-6. Reporting. (2005)

Statute text

A. Prior to December 31 of each year, the commission shall report to the legislative finance committee, the legislative education study committee and the governor regarding the status of articulation programs and the transfer of students between institutions.

B. The report developed by the commission shall include an analysis of the number of students transferring between campuses, the number of credits being requested and accepted for transfer, institutions denying transfer of credits and reasons for denial, the progress of transfer students at receiving institutions, the average number of credit hours earned by graduating transfer students compared to the average number of credit hours earned by graduates who originated at the institution and a summary of student complaints regarding articulation. The report shall include data and other information obtained on both a statewide and individual institution basis.

C. The report shall look at outcomes with regard to such factors as transfer rates, persistence rates after transfer and graduation rates.

D. The report shall identify each institution against which a meritorious complaint has been filed. The report shall summarize the recommendations of the commission with regard to those complaints.

E. All institutions shall provide articulation information required by the commission for the development of the annual report prior to September 30 of each year.

F. The general education core, the discipline module for business and early childhood education and the common course numbering and naming system for all courses in those modules shall be effective by spring semester 2006, and the printed materials of all institutions shall conform to the system by fall 2006. A minimum of three additional discipline modules shall be effective not later than fall semester 2007 and an additional three discipline modules by fall semester 2008.

History

History: Laws 1995, ch. 224, § 6; 2005, ch. 272, § 7.

Annotations

The 2005 amendment, effective June 17, 2005, provides in Subsection B that the report shall include the average number of credit hours earned by graduating transfer students compared to the average number of credit hours earned by graduates who originated at the institution; adds Subsection C to provide that the report shall look at outcomes with regard to such factors as transfer rates, persistence rates after transfer and graduation rates; provides in Subsection D that the report shall summarize recommendations with regard to complaints; and adds Subsection F to provide deadlines the preparation of the general education core, modules, and the common course numbering and naming system.